

# Groundbreaking Charles H. Mackie retrospective to reopen City Art Centre

With a full range of safety measures in place to ensure the safety of visitors and staff, Edinburgh's City Art Centre will re-open its doors to the public on Saturday 15th May 2021. Visitors will be able to enjoy two exhibitions – the brand new retrospective Charles H. Mackie: Colour and Light, and the continuing collection display Bright Shadows: Scottish Art in the 1920s.

This summer, Edinburgh's City Art Centre presents the first major exhibition in over a century dedicated to the Scottish painter and printmaker Charles Hodge Mackie (1862-1920), one of the most versatile artists of his generation.

[Charles H. Mackie: Colour and Light](#) is a major new exhibition that sets out to re-evaluate Mackie's significance and contribution. A full-scale retrospective, it charts the progress of his career and creative development, from the rural Scottish landscapes of his youth to his spectacular late Venetian scenes. The exhibition brings together over fifty artworks from public and private collections, including loans from the National Galleries of Scotland, the Royal Scottish Academy of Art & Architecture and Perth Museum & Art Gallery. Showcasing the breadth of Mackie's creative vision and

talents, it is the most comprehensive public display of his work in over a century.



Charles H. Mackie, *La Danse du Village*, c.1918. The Royal Scottish Academy of Art and Architecture.

Born in Aldershot and brought up in Edinburgh, Mackie trained at the Trustees Academy School of Art. He remained based in Edinburgh throughout his career, although he travelled often and embraced an international outlook. As a mature artist, he worked across an impressive range of media, not only producing oil paintings and watercolours, but also murals, woodblock prints, book illustrations and sculpture. His influences were similarly diverse, drawing inspiration from French Symbolism, the Celtic Revival movement and the landscapes of his European travels.

Mackie was well-connected and respected in contemporary artistic circles. He was close friends with E.A. Hornel and other members of the Glasgow Boys, and he met Paul Gauguin, Édouard Vuillard and the Nabis while working in France. In the 1890s he was commissioned by Patrick Geddes to produce murals for Ramsay Garden in Edinburgh's Old Town, as well as illustrations for the pioneering journal *The Evergreen*. In later years, Mackie spent time in Yorkshire, where he joined local artists groups and provided support and tuition to the young Laura Knight.

He was a founding member and Chairman of the Society of Scottish Artists, and was elected to the Royal Scottish Academy in 1917. He exhibited his work widely, both in Scotland and further afield. However, despite his many achievements, he has always been treated as a peripheral figure in the story of Scottish art.

Councillor Donald Wilson Culture and Communities Convener, said: "We are thrilled to be once again reopening the doors to

the City Art Centre next week. The centre for our world class collections and exhibitions, we have certainly missed it!

“As we mark the centenary of Charles Mackie’s death, we are very proud to host this major study of his work in the City Art Centre. Bringing together over 50 artworks it promises to be a significant tribute to one of Edinburgh’s own. I’m sure ‘Colour and Light’ will captivate many visitors as well as inspire them through the accompanying programme of events and activities.”



This and featured image – Greg Macvean Photography  
Councillor Amy McNeese-Mechan, Culture and Communities Vice Convener, said: “This fantastic exhibition really shows the breadth of Mackie’s talents, and I think ‘Colour and Light’ are something we could all use right now!

“I’d like to reassure people that we continue to take measures to ensure the safety of visitors and our staff, so please follow the latest guidance and avoid visiting if showing any symptoms of coronavirus. We’re all very much looking forward to welcoming visitors back when we reopen next week.”

Curator Dr Helen Scott said: “This exhibition is the culmination of many years of detective work. We’ve been able to reunite finished paintings with their preparatory studies, giving insights into Mackie’s working methods, and we’ve also been able to explore the ways in which he pursued key themes across different types of media – shifting from oils and watercolours to printmaking and back again.

“Highlights of the exhibition include several paintings that have recently undergone conservation treatment, such as *Artis Ancilla*, a large-scale composition of a nude reclining in the artist’s studio, which is part of the City Art Centre’s own fine art collection. Also featured on display are a number of artworks from private collections, such as *Breton Girl*

Crocheting, which is one of Mackie's earliest experiments in the Symbolist style, or Study for Pitreavie Mural, which is a rare surviving watercolour depicting part of an original mural scheme that no longer exists.

"Most of these privately-owned artworks have not been seen in public for many years. All in all, the exhibition is a wonderful, unique opportunity to celebrate Mackie's life, connections and achievements."

Mackie biographer and researcher Pat Clark said: "This exhibition is the first major public retrospective since the artist's Memorial Exhibition in 1921. Charles H. Mackie RSA RSW was a well-respected artist in his day and well-connected in artistic circles in France and Scotland. The works on display trace his development and responses to the places he visited and the people he met.

"The exhibition will draw together all the stages of Mackie's life and career, from early Scottish landscapes in Kirkcudbright to the magnificent large-scale oils executed in Venice. Colour and Light will be a long-overdue tribute to one of Scotland's outstanding and unjustly neglected artists. The exhibition will showcase this achievement. It will bring me untold joy to share my passion for Mackie's art with those who visit the City Art Centre between May and October."



Charles H. Mackie, There were Three Maidens pu'd a Flower (By the Bonnie Banks o' Fordie),  
c.1897. City Art Centre, Museums & Galleries Edinburgh.

Charles H. Mackie: Colour and Light is being presented as part of Edinburgh Art Festival 2021, and it is accompanied by a varied programme of public events and activities.

In order to protect and maintain the safety of our visitors and staff, the City Art Centre has introduced a range of new safety measures and procedures throughout the venue, including a one-way system, installation of screens at reception, hand

sanitiser stations, extra barriers and signage and staff will of course be wearing face coverings while offering visitors a very warm, socially distanced welcome.

Visitors are asked to wear face coverings and pre-book free tickets for allocated time slots in advance via [edinburghmuseums.org.uk](http://edinburghmuseums.org.uk)

Charles H. Mackie: Colour and Light opens on 15 May 2021 and runs until 10 October 2021. Admission is free.

Visitors to the City Art Centre will also be able to enjoy the free collection display Bright Shadows: Scottish Art in the 1920s. This exhibition explores the work of [Scottish artists during the 1920s](#) – an evocative period of social, political and economic change. Bright Shadows opened in September and will run until Sunday 27 June